

Commander's Column

What is DIVERSITY? This word keeps coming up and recently our CNO described his initiative concerning DIVERSITY, particularly concerning women and minorities. But what are we talking about? And what can it mean for us?

America is a nation born out of the traditions of many great peoples and countries. From our rich Native American heritage, through slavery and the African American heritage and through the amalgamation of many societies and cultures on Ellis Island as our forebears immigrated to the shores of the United States, we are a nation built upon differences and diversity.

Organizations and business are fast-recognizing the value of embracing diversity. They see that in order to reach a population of varying backgrounds and cultures as customers, they must create an equally diverse staff to serve these customers. By the year 2050, it is estimated that our society will be equally split between whites and non-whites. With this prediction in mind, it not only makes moral sense but good business sense to not only embrace diversity but to accommodate it as well...we must reflect the demographics we serve.

Diversity, I believe, goes much further than the obvious social, racial, and gender differences. It goes down to the core of individuality. Everyone brings their unique insight, background and personality to the group. It's important that we recognize the



worth of every single one of our shipmates. We should encourage their ideas and support their initiatives; but, more importantly, we must realize that they have an untapped wealth of knowledge that isn't always apparent.

We, as a command, will have the opportunity to open our hearts and minds to individual differences. This week we celebrate the merging of the DT and HN corps. These two very similar yet very different entities will have to opportunity to share their backgrounds and experiences. Together they will learn from each other and take the best of both to bring about a collective greatness as one.

What can each of us do to promote the acceptance of diversity? The first thing, I believe, is to keep an open mind and expect the unexpected. Don't, for even a moment, assume that anyone has a predictable frame of reference to offer or that you can look at someone and determine what input or value they will bring to the table. Keep your awareness level high, be an active listener and don't overlook the wealth of experience that surrounds you. That is diversity in action. That will make us better and that is the right attitude to maintain.

Commander sends,

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